No. 52 (New Series)  

The Marian Library/International Marian Research Institute sponsored its first symposium – Living with Mary Today – July 26 - 29, 2006. Suggested three years ago by participants at the International Marian Research Institute, the symposium was intended as a way of sharing information on new developments in pastoral and academic programs, in expressions of devotion, and in cultural and artistic areas. The program served as an updating on recent publications, as well as an introduction to new currents of Marian devotion and culture.

One hundred and thirty-six participants from diverse backgrounds registered – teachers, directors of Marian shrines and continuing education programs, catechists, religious sisters and brothers, graduate students, priests, members of secular institutes. Participants came from twenty-five states (USA), Korea, China, India, Venezuela, and Brazil. The participants were housed in the new Marianist Hall of the University of Dayton, where, one night, they calmly responded, to the amazement of bewildered students, as a fire alarm required evacuation at 4:00 am. All sessions took place in the grand ballroom of Kennedy Union which was decorated with Marian art — provided by Michael Manning (Omaha), Ann Bain (Dayton), John Lemker, S.M., and Donald Smith, S.M. (Dayton). Tables lining the walls displayed recent publications, and Marian CDs were played during the program breaks.

Each day began with Marian Morning Prayer, and the afternoon Mass reflected the intercultural atmosphere of the gathering. The four morning sessions were devoted to recent developments in biblical, doctrinal, liturgical, historical, catechetical, and ecumenical areas. Ample time was allotted for discussion among the participants as well as for questions to the presenters. Afternoon sessions dealt with Marian devotion at shrines, pilgrimages, parishes, and the role of apparitions.

Perhaps greatest interest was shown for reports on the implantation of Marian devotion in newer cultural settings. Fr. Denis Wiseman, O.P., reported on ways in which African family customs have influenced devotion. Fr. R. K. Samy, rector of the Shrine of Vailankanni (India), spoke on the ways Marian shrines attract non-Christians. Sr. Celia Chua outlined how traditional ancestor veneration has influenced Marian devotion in China and Taiwan.

Evening sessions were devoted to programs of Marian music, film, and art. The first evening featured a program of Marian music, beginning with the eighth-century hymn Ave Maris Stella, sung with organ improvisations between the stanzas. The titles in the opening lines of Ave, Maris Stella furnished the divisions for the program of readings and music – Star of the Sea, God’s Beloved Mother, Ever-Virgin, Gate of Heaven.

The second evening’s program centered on several films – The Passion of the Christ, the Gospel of John (2003), and the CNN Presentation “The Two Marys.” The third evening’s session was an illustrated presentation on sacred art – its relation to spirituality, devotional images, and the way in which art serves as a synthesis of the Christian message.

At the concluding banquet, the Marian Library Medal was conferred on Bro. William Fackovec, S.M., who has served as Librarian in the Marian Library since 1960. After a power-point continued on page 6
An early edition of the works of St. Louis Grignon de Montfort contains a map of his mission-preaching routes in France, together with an inscription noting the reasons for his success in parish missions: the fire of his sermon, the force and appeal of his hymns (cantiques spirituelles) and his virtuous life.

De Montfort was an indefatigable writer of hymns, beginning in the seminary and continuing through the sixteen years of priestly ministry. Many of his two hundred hymns are long — some very long, with over a hundred stanzas. The hymns cover almost as many pages as all of his prose works.

Few of these hymns would fit into today’s category of “liturgical music.” They were intended for the parish mission:

Arise, dear brother, come, my friend,
Let us arise before the sun,
God calls us to his festival,
The Mission has begun!

In the 18th-century parish mission, the mission preacher chose — or composed — the hymns. Very long hymns may have been interspersed with exhortations. In contrast to hymns written in the classical style, De Montfort’s mission songs were written in the language of the people, with a simple meter and rhyme, to be sung to a well-known and popular melody, sometimes even to a tavern song. De Montfort contrasted the two styles:

Your conceit and lofty style
Show well your shameless taste.
These are my poems and my songs:
If they are not elegant, they are pure,
If they flatter not the ear,
They tell of great wonders.

The hymns were didactic and exhortative, covering the themes to be treated in the mission — the Holy Trinity, the Cross, the commandments, Christian virtues, renunciation, the Virgin Mary, the consecrated life. St. Louis was convinced that a song could convey a message and remain with people far longer than any sermon.

You, preacher, in my songs
Can find your homilies;
I have digested their substance
For your guidance and delight.
Here are topics for meditation
I believe I rightly claim,
For often a verse, a line,
Can communicate a truth . . . .
Know that a sacred hymn
Illuminates and clears the mind,
Chases all black humor from the heart
And sets God firmly in remembrance.

De Montfort is known for an intense and distinctive Marian devotion. Yet, similar to his writings, Marian references do not dominate the hymns. A hymn on the Eucharist states that Jesus instituted the Eucharist because he wished to remain with Mary:

Jesus could not leave Mary
So strong the love which bound them.
That is why, just before his death,
He established the Eucharist,
So that after the Ascension,
He could be her consolation here below.

De Montfort’s Collected Writings were published in English in 1987. At that time, it was considered “not expedient” to translate all the hymns, possibly because of their colloquial popular style. However, the fine article on “Hymns” in the Handbook of Spirituality prompted requests for the translation. The work was undertaken by Fr. Patrick Gaffney, S.M.M., and his sister, Sr. Rosemary Gaffney, D.W. Fr. Gaffney claims not a poetic translation, but “authentic fidelity to Montfort’s text . . . not only to each stanza but also, for the most part, to each line.”

Few examples of popular Catholic hymnody used for parish missions in past centuries have survived. An interesting study would be a comparison of mission hymns with those from revival movements which were occurring at the same time. We are grateful for this edition of the hymns of the irrepressible missionaire-chansonnier:

I am ready, Jesus, my Lord,
To turn up preaching anywhere,
Supported by your power.
Make me, Lord, your missionary;
Even though it has no income
But only insults and rebuffs,
I am content, content, dear Model.

God Alone II: The Hymns of St. Louis Marie de Montfort, 2005
The Virgin Mary in New Catholic Catechisms

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), approved in 1992, was intended as a reference text, a resource for bishops and teachers of theology. Other versions were to follow. Recently, two new catechisms, both based on the CCC, have appeared: the Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, and, from the American bishops, the United States Catholic Catechism for Adults.

The Compendium, "a kind of vademecum for believers and unbelievers," was the work of a commission appointed by John Paul II in 2003, headed by Cardinal Ratzinger, who, as Benedict XVI, approved the text in 2005. The Compendium— in question-and-answer form—has several new features: quotations from the saints, distinctive religious art, and a section of Common Prayers and Formulas of Doctrine.

Similar to the CCC, references to the Virgin Mary are not limited to one section but are integrated throughout—Creed, Liturgy, Christian Life, Prayer. Mary stands with Abraham as the two "principal witnesses" (26) in Sacred Scripture to the obedience of faith. Abraham was "the father of all who believe" (Romans 4:11); "the Virgin Mary . . . throughout her entire life, embodied in a perfect way the obedience of faith." The Creed's statement "conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary" is why Mary is called the Mother of God (95); it is also the reason for her sinlessness (96), and for her cooperation in the divine plan (97). Mary is "the new Eve, the true mother of all the living, who with a mother's love cooperates in their birth and their formation in grace... the figure of the Church in its most perfect realization" (100).

Mary's relation to the Church appears in several places: The Holy Spirit made her Mother of the "whole Christ, that is, of Jesus the Head and of the Church his body" (142). Mary and the saints are models and intercessors (165). "Mary was present and aided the Church at its beginning with her prayers . . . she continues to intercede for her children . . . The faithful see in Mary an image and an anticipation of the resurrection that awaits them . . . The Church contemplates in her what she herself is called to be on earth and what she will be in the homeland in heaven" (197-199).

There is a distinction between prayer with and prayer to Mary: "...The Church loves to pray to Mary and with Mary, the perfect 'pray-er,' and to 'magnify' and invoke the Lord with her" (562). Mary's prayer in the Magnificat and at Cana is "the song both of the Mother of God and of the Church, the joyous thanksgiving that rises from the hearts of the poor because their hope is met by the fulfillment of the divine promises" (547).

Works of art introduce the various sections of the Compendium, many from the late medieval period: the icon of Christ the Pantocrator (1546), the Adoration of the Magi (Gentile Da Fabiano, 1423), an illumination of the Days of Creation, Jesus Giving Communion to the Saints (Joos van Wassenhove), the Triumph of the Cross (Basilica of San Clemente), Jesus in the Garden and St. John Contemplating Mary (El Greco), the Angelic Choir. Two contemporary works also appear: a mosaic of the Incarnation from the Mater Redemp- toris Chapel (Vatican) and an icon of Pentecost by the Ethiopian artist—Isaac Fanous (shown at right).
A second catechism, adapted from the CCC, the United States Catholic Catechism for Adults is from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (July 2006). It is a “local catechism,” intended for “various situations and cultures, while carefully preserving the unity of the faith and fidelity to Catholic doctrine.”

This adult catechism includes discussion questions intended to relate Catholic teaching to daily living. For example, after stating that the Virgin Mary is “the perfect model” of faith, the question is “What steps might you take to make your faith more effective in our culture? Who are outstanding models of faith that inspire you to a deeper faith? . . . Can you identify with Mary’s ‘yes’ to God at the Annunciation?” Mary was the greatest disciple of her Son. “How are you growing in your call to discipleship?”

Each section contains a “Lesson of Faith” illustrated in the life of an individual associated with American Catholicism: Fr. Junipero Serra, Sr. Thea Bowman, St. Kateri Tekawitha, Fr. Patrick Peyton, Cardinal Bernardin, Bishop Fulton Sheen. Our Lady of Guadalupe is part of St. Juan Diego’s story: “There are millions in the United States whose devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe and regard for St. Juan Diego help keep our faith and commitment to evangelization alive.”

Items frequently not well understood in the United States are clarified. “Private revelation, that is, messages such as those given by the Blessed Virgin Mary at Lourdes and Fatima, add nothing to what was publicly revealed up and through Christ but can help inspire a more profound commitment to what has been revealed through public Revelation.” The distinction between adoration and veneration, so difficult for some to comprehend, is explained: “We do not pray to Mary in the same way we pray to God. In praying to Mary, we invoke her intercession on behalf of our needs, whereas when we pray to favors . . . The faithful do not worship pictures and statues . . . The veneration of Mary and saints ultimately leads to God.”

As in the Compendium, a distinction is made between prayer with Mary and prayer to Mary. We join Mary “in praising God for his gifts to her and seeking her intercession.” Where did Jesus learn to pray? “As a child, Jesus first learned to pray from Mary and Joseph.”

Both the Compendium and the U.S. Catechism for Adults provide clear and authoritative presentations of the Catholic teaching on the Virgin Mary, especially useful for clarifications to American Evangelicals and others who are attracted to the Catholic Church but who have difficulty with “the question of Mary.”

BOOK NOTES


These essays were first presented at the “Mary, Mother of God” conference, sponsored by the Center for Catholic and Evangelical Theology, at St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minnesota, June, 2002. Recently, references to the Virgin Mary in Protestant churches are not unusual, especially during the Christmas season. These essays, however, go beyond a passing reference and ask how the Virgin Mary is related to the life of the church at this time.

Beverly Gaventa in “Nothing Will Be Impossible to God: Mary as the Mother of Believers,” relates that Luke-Acts appears to create a “household of believers.” She asks whether Protestants can advance beyond Mary as a moral exemplar of faith to accepting her as “Mother of Believers.” Mary embodies the qualities associated with “maternal thinking,” that is, caring for the life, growth and strengthening of her children. Can Mary serve as “mother of believers” within the “household of believers”?

In “A Space for God,” Robert W. Jenson deals with classical Protestantism’s stricture against the invocation of the saints. He refers to covenanted Israel as the space inhabited by God. As the created space for God, Mary is Israel-concentrated. To invoke Mary is to take claim of, to address from within the space, God’s presence within space-Israel.

David S. Yeago in “the Presence of Mary in the Mystery of the Church,” with the help of John Paul II’s Redemptoris Mater, proposes the formation of a “Marian consciousness” for the Church. As Mary was an “active agent” in the formation of Church at Calvary and Pentecost, so she continues as an “active agent” in the faith development of Christians. He concludes with specific suggestions – promotion of Marian feasts, and proclamation of Mary’s Magnificat with “unadulterated enthusiasm.”

In “The Blessed Virgin Mary in Evangelical Perspective,” Timothy George asks how contemporary Evangelicalism – heir of the Reformation, the Great Awakening, and Fundamentalism – can include a place for Mary. Biblically based Evangelicals could agree with the Virgin-Birth, with Mary as Servant of the Lord, and with the biblically founded title of Mary as Daughter of Zion; Evangelicals who ascribe to some doctrinal development can accept Mary as Theotokos. Sadly, the essay concludes, the reason for the hesitation on the part of many Protestant churches is an “ecclesiological hardening of the arteries” – developed as a response to Catholicism’s Marian excesses.

Statements on Mary from Catholics, Orthodox, and Anglicans are not unusual. This collection enlarges the circle to include Lutheran, Presbyterian, Baptist, and Evangelical voices illustrating George Tavard’s words that Mary can be “a unifying figure who brings often discordant voices into harmony.”
The Annunciation to Mary in Luke’s Gospel has been the subject not only of innumerable homilies and commentaries but also the scene most illustrated in Christian art. Jaroslav Pelikan says, “Of all the Marian scenes that have been portrayed through the ages, references to Luke’s Annunciation scene have exceeded the number of references to all other Marian themes combined.” In a museum in Japan, Fr. LaVerdiere saw a note in front of a beautiful landscape painting: “If you want to appre-ciate this painting and other landscape paintings, you enter the painting. For the inside, you can see the trees and mountains around you.” This work is more than a biblical commentary; it is an invitation to enter and spend some time in the scene – with a well-informed and insightful tour guide.

At the entry, we relate the Annunciation to Mary to the two other scenes which form the triptych in the prologue of Luke’s Gospel – the Annunciation to Zachariah, and the Visitation. Gabriel’s words are simultaneously an announcement of a great event, and of God’s choice of Mary and her mission. The angel’s message has three phases: the greeting – “Hail, fully graced”; the explanation – the child will be the “Son of the Most High,” and, in him, the kingdom of David would become the kingdom of God. Finally, Gabriel says that Jesus’ conception by the Holy Spirit will confer on him a unique dignity. Mary’s response echoes the words of Abraham, Sarah, Elizabeth: “Nothing (literally no word) will be impossible for God, including the word addressed to me... Fiat.”

In this journey into the Annunciation scene, the author accompanies the reader at every step, reviewing, in a new way, what has already been seen. The guide can be picked up at any point – making it an ideal reference for this Gospel which appears frequently in Marian liturgies.

A portrait by El Greco shows St. Luke painting the icon of the Virgin Mary with Child (Hodegetria). Luke, concludes Fr. LaVerdiere, was a “superb storyteller, a person of deep faith... an excellent artist.”

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In 1998, three-hundred thousand members of the new ecclesial movements gathered in Rome on Pentecost Sunday. In 2003-04, St. Mary’s College, Twickenham, sponsored a conference on the new ecclesial movements, such as the Community of Sant’Egidio, the Community of the Beatitudes, Communion and Liberation, Schoenstatt, l’Arche, Neocatechumenate Way, Sodalium Christianae Vitae, the Focolare. Almost all these movements were founded after Vatican II as response to the council’s “universal call to holiness.” They are predominantly lay groups, seeking a “deeper spirituality,” with emphasis on the Christian values in marriage and family, and commitment to community life in the Church.

Although these organizations may not have a Marian title or a specific Marian devotion, almost all have a “Marian profile” embedded within their spirit and structure. Fr. Giussani, founder of Communion and Liberation, spoke of the “Mariological focus” of the Christian life and the reality of the Church. All Christians are called to embrace reality all the way to its mysterious origin in Christ, and to live this adherence to the mystery as a new creation. This unlimited and unconditional capacity to embrace the real identifies Mary’s stance in the world. “The Virgin totally respected the freedom of God by ‘saving’ his freedom... She obeyed God because she respected His freedom without imposing her own methods.”

The founder of Schoenstatt, Fr. Joseph Kentenich, wished to replace “mechanistic thinking” with an organism of attachments – which was to include persons, places, things, ideas. Central to this organism of attachments is Mary – as mother, as companion on the journey, as the one who helps to solidify the qualities of those attachments. For the Sodalitium, Mary is the “paradigmatic Christian layperson,” both in prayer and in living the Gospel words. For Focolare, the image of Mary offers a spirituality “all hers” – communitarian, universal, promoting unity within communion.

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The Marian profile present within and lived by these ecclesial movements may well illustrate Cardinal Newman’s sentiment: “In all times, the laity has been the measure of the Catholic spirit.”

“Symposium” continued from page 1

“This Is Your Life” presentation, the citation for the award was read, noting Bro. Bill’s many contributions: library acquisitions (especially for the rare book section, now numbering over six thousand books published before 1800); the descriptive cataloging of rare books; authoring works on the Marian Library collection; providing omniscient reference services, library exhibits with informative notes; classifying Marian images; translating of Marian documents; giving countless tours and explanations, lectures and classes on Marian topics and on the history of the book: and, finally, innumerable “extra” hours accommodating students and visitors to the Marian Library.

Material from the symposium appears on the Mary Page. Check “What about Apparitions?” and “Spirituality and Art.”

UPDATE
One - a bimonthly publication from the Catholic Near East Welfare Association (CNEWA) - has informative articles on Eastern Catholic Churches and their Orthodox sister-churches, including their origins and their American foundations. Recent features have been on the Ruthenian Metropolia of Pittsburgh, the Maronite Church, the Coptic Orthodox Church, the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Melkite Greek Catholic Church, the Chaldean Church, as well as reports on Christian communities in Ethiopia, Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon, Armenia, Iraq. The May 2006 issue had “Ethiopia Celebrates Mary,” a description of the annual pilgrimage to Aksum, on November 30, feast of Mary of Zion, commemorating the African nation’s Judaic heritage and Christian faith. To subscribe - CNEWA, 1011 First Avenue; New York, NY 10022. www.cnewa.org

Ignatian Family in Lourdes. From July 27 to August 4, 2006, about 10,000 people - some four hundred French Jesuits, a thousand young people, and thousands from forty Ignatian-inspired religious congregations - gathered at Lourdes to celebrate the “Jubilee Year” commemorating the 450th anniversary of the death of St. Ignatius and the 500th anniversary of the birth of Peter Favre and Francis Xavier.

The gathering was acknowledged as an “innovation.” In Lourdes for the first time, Fr. Kolvenbach, superior general of the Jesuits, informally remarked, “Perhaps Robert Bellarmine, in a concise formula, summarized what Our Lady meant for Ignatius, Electa elegit. Our Lady was for Saint Ignatius the One who chose, in a free and loving manner, what God chose for her.”

Asked to comment on the Church today, the superior general replied, “In a few words, I will say sub pondere crescit. Under the weight of all that can be laid against her, the Church grows and progresses. The media rarely miss an opportunity to make public whatever doesn’t honor the Church. The danger then is to fail to see how the Resurrected Lord makes His Church live, through the many signs and testimonies of holiness... which fill the life of the people of God, which is the Church.”

On February 15, 2006, Benedict XVI concluded a five-year-long series of conferences on the psalms and canticles of the Liturgy of the Hours with a commentary on Mary’s Magnificat. He concluded with the words of St. Ambrose, “If, in the flesh, there is only one mother of Christ, in the faith, all may give birth to Christ, when the Word of God is generously received.”

MIRACLES AT LOURDES. The criteria for determining a canonical “miracle,” given in the 18th century by Prospero Lambertini, specified that “no previous medication or treatment” could be given, and that the cure be “perfect, sudden, and definitive.” However, almost all who come to Lourdes today have undergone some previous treatment, and doctors are hesitant to declare any healing as “definitive.”

Recently, the Bishop of Tarbes and Lourdes, Msgr. Jacques Perrier, suggested that an approach be taken which is “more respectful of the person and of faith itself... If someone comes to Lourdes, regains health at a precise moment, in a healing which is complete, stable, with no recurrence, some recognition should be given. In the past, individuals who experienced a healing which could not be classified as a ‘miracle’ were counseled to keep quiet. A more humane approach would be to see whether the miracle occurred in an atmosphere of faith and prayer and whether the person who regained health continues as a witness to Christian prayer.”

Six million people visit Lourdes each year, and 7,000 have claimed to have been cured. However, only 67 are recognized as “canonical” miracles, the most recent miracle declared in Italy last September. (A person, now 94, was cured of a life-threatening rheumatic fever after a pilgrimage in 1952.) This development is part of a reconsideration of the requirements for miracles - a long-standing discussion at Lourdes (Cf. “Marian Library Newsletter,” no. 38,[1999]).

Under the weight of all that can be laid against her, the Church grows and progresses.
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